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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new non-provisional applications under 37 CFR 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 080398.P368

Total Pages 2

First Named Inventor or Application Identifier Eric Edwards, et al

Express Mail Label No. EL627466676US

ADDRESS TO: Assistant Commissioner for Patents
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APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

1. X Fee Transmittal Form
(Submit an original, and a duplicate for fee processing)
2. X Specification (Total Pages 18)
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
 - Descriptive Title of the Invention
 - Cross References to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
 - Background of the Invention
 - Brief Summary of the Invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claims
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. X Drawings(s) (35 USC 113) (Total Sheets 5)
4. X Oath or Declaration (Total Pages 5)
 - a. X Newly Executed (Original or Copy)
 - b. Copy from a Prior Application (37 CFR 1.63(d))
(for Continuation/Divisional with Box 17 completed) (**Note Box 5 below**)
 - i. DELETIONS OF INVENTOR(S) Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 CFR 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).
5. Incorporation By Reference (useable if Box 4b is checked)
The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied under Box 4b, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.
6. Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)
7. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission

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09/632535

(if applicable, all necessary)

- a. _____ Computer Readable Copy
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ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

8. _____ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & documents(s))
9. _____ a. 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement (where there is an assignee)
_____ X b. Power of Attorney
10. _____ English Translation Document (if applicable)
11. _____ a. Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449
_____ b. Copies of IDS Citations
12. _____ Preliminary Amendment
13. X Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503) (Should be specifically itemized)
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____ Continuation ____ Divisional ____ Continuation-in-part (CIP)
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UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

for

ONLINE STORY COLLABORATION

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ONLINE STORY COLLABORATION

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No.

5 60/181,841, filed February 11, 2000.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to networked computers, and more particularly to allowing collaboration by users of networked computers.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Collaboration software exists that allows multiple people to contribute to a single document through a network such as the Internet. However, typical collaborative software provides only review and revision functions for existing documents and offers no

capability for the multiple users to collaborate in creating an entirely new document online. Furthermore, the type of content that can be contributed to an existing document by the multiple users is limited.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 An online collaborative story system creates a story from content received from multiple collaborators. The content from each collaborator relates to an element of the story defined in a story concept supplied by an originator. The originator also designates himself or one or more of the collaborators as an editor for the story. The editor decides what content contributed by the collaborators will be accepted for inclusion in the story.

10 The finished story is published for either public access or for private access by only the originator and collaborators. In another aspect, the content contributed by the collaborators is reviewed in light of pre-determined standards and content that does not meet the standards is deleted. Additionally, the originator and/or collaborators may be rewarded for participating in the creation of the story.

15 Because the invention starts the story creation process with only a story concept, the collaborators are given more creative freedom to craft the finished story than a system that only allows revisions to an existing document. If multiple people contribute different content for the same element, the editor can combine the different content. When the story concept is a single scene, a collaborator contributes content for a scene that begins where
20 the last posted scene ends. Multiple types of content can be contributed to the story, including text, graphics, still images, video, audio and/or a mix of multimedia data types. Thus, the completed story may take different forms, such as a movie with both audio and video content, an audio-only story, a text-only story, or a text story with still image illustrations.

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The present invention describes systems, clients, servers, methods, and computer-readable media of varying scope. In addition to the aspects and advantages of the present invention described in this summary, further aspects and advantages of the invention will become apparent by reference to the drawings and by reading the detailed description that follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A is a diagram illustrating an overview of the operation of an embodiment of an online collaborative story system according to the invention;

FIGs. 1B and 1C are diagrams of a computer environment suitable for practicing the invention; and

FIGs. 2A-D are flowcharts of methods to be performed by a server computer according to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In the following detailed description of embodiments of the invention, reference is made to the accompanying drawings in which like references indicate similar elements, and in which is shown by way of illustration specific embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. These embodiments are described in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention, and it is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that logical, mechanical, electrical and other changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the present invention is defined only by the appended claims.

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Beginning with an overview of the operation of the invention, FIG. 1A illustrates one embodiment of an online collaborative story system 100. An originator 103 submits a story concept to a collaborative story server computer 101 to be posted in a story concepts area 109. The story concept may be in the form of a storyboard containing a sequence of scenes, a series of chapter synopsis, a set of characters and a potential plot line, a starting scene, or other type of data structure that indicates the subject matter of the story. The story concept also specifies the types of content that will be used to create the story including text, graphics, still images, video, audio and/or a mix of multimedia data types. One or more collaborators 105 choose a story concept from the story concepts area 109 and upload content appropriate for the chosen the story to the working content area 111. The uploaded content is associated with an element of the chosen story, such as a scene in a storyboard, a chapter in a book, a character, or a scene that follows an already existing scene. The originator 103 may also act as a collaborator by uploading content to the working content area 111. The content contributed by the collaborators may be different, e.g., one collaborator may supply an image for a scene while a second collaborator provides text related to the image.

The originator, or one or more collaborators, acts as an editor to decide what portions of the uploaded content will be used in the story. When multiple collaborators act as editors, a periodic vote will be taken on the content that exists in the working content area 111. Once the story is finished, the story is posted to a published story area 113 where it may be publicly available for another other users, i.e. viewer 107. Alternatively, the finished story can be published as a private story in the published story area 113 so that only the originator 103 and collaborators 105 can view it.

In one embodiment, as shown in FIG. 1B, the collaborative story server computer 101 hosts a collaborative story web site and is part of, or coupled to, an ISP (Internet Service Provider) 135 to provide the story content over the Internet. Client computers 123 for the originator 103, the collaborator 105 and the viewer 107 execute a conventional Internet browsing application to exchange data with the server 101. It is readily apparent that the present invention is not limited to Internet access and Internet web-based sites; directly coupled and private networks are also contemplated. In this embodiment, an administrator of the web site may set rating criteria for story concepts and uploaded content to prevent the posting of information which may be offensive to some users.

One embodiment of a computer system suitable for use as the collaborative story server computer 101 is illustrated in FIG. 1C. The computer system 140, includes a processor 150, memory 155 and input/output capability 160 coupled to a system bus 165. The memory 155 is configured to store instructions which, when executed by the processor 150, perform the methods described herein. The memory 155 may also store data and content related to the stories. Input/output 160 provides for the delivery and display of the content of the story or portions or representations thereof. Input/output 160 also encompasses various types of computer-readable media, including any type of storage device that is accessible by the processor 150. One of skill in the art will immediately recognize that the term “computer-readable medium/media” further encompasses a carrier wave that encodes a data signal. It will also be appreciated that the server 101 is controlled by operating system software executing in memory 155. Input/output and related media 160 store the computer-executable instructions for the operating system and methods of the present invention as well as the data and content related to the stories.

resulting scene may be a combination of the different content. The originator can also serve as a director, giving the collaborators particular assignments, such as a story chapter or the characteristics of a story character. Additionally, more than one person can contribute to the story concept either before or after it is posted on the server.

5 Furthermore, the owner of the online collaborative story system may choose to reward originators and collaborators to encourage participation in creating the online stories. The rewards could range from simple recognition on the web site to prizes to cash. One of skill in the art will immediately conceive of many ways to determine the rewards, including votes by viewers of the finished stories, and such alternate
10 embodiments are contemplated as within the scope of the invention.

While the invention is not limited to any particular system configuration, for sake of clarity a simplified server having three distinct story areas has been described. It will be appreciated that the story concepts, working content, and published stories could be divided by topic, age group, content rating (e.g., family verses adult), etc. Furthermore, it
15 is contemplated that private stories, from concept to finished product, are protected from general access through conventional security and authentication processes.

Next, the particular methods of the invention are described in terms of computer software with reference to a series of flowcharts. FIGs. 2A-D illustrate embodiments of three methods that are executed by the collaborative story server 101 of FIG. 1A. The
20 methods constitute computer programs made up of computer-executable instructions illustrated as blocks (acts) 201 until 209 in FIG. 2A, blocks 221 until 231 in FIG. 2B, blocks 241 until 253 in FIG. 2C, and block 261 until 273 in FIG. 2D. Describing the methods by reference to a flowchart enables one skilled in the art to develop such programs including such instructions to carry out the methods on suitably configured

computers (the processor of the computer executing the instructions from computer-readable media). If written in a programming language conforming to a recognized standard, such instructions can be executed on a variety of hardware platforms and for interface to a variety of operating systems. In addition, the present invention is not

5 described with reference to any particular programming language. It will be appreciated that a variety of programming languages may be used to implement the teachings of the invention as described herein. Furthermore, it is common in the art to speak of software, in one form or another (e.g., program, procedure, process, application, module, logic...), as taking an action or causing a result. Such expressions are merely a shorthand way of

10 saying that execution of the software by a computer causes the processor of the computer to perform an action or a produce a result.

Referring first to FIG. 2A, a create concept method 200 is executed by the collaborative story server to create a story concept in the story concept area. The server receives a story concept from the originator (block 201), and the method 200 optionally

15 determines, at block 203, whether the content meets pre-determined acceptance criteria, i.e., a content standard set by the site administrator. If the content is not acceptable, the concept is deleted from the server at block 205. Otherwise, if the story concept is acceptable, it is posted in the story concept area (block 207). The method 200 also receives a list of users that the originator designates as editors for the story concept (block

20 209). The list may contain one or more specific user identifiers, or may specify that all collaborators are editors.

When a collaborator chooses a story concept to contribute to, the server executes an upload content method 220 to post the uploaded content in the working content area as illustrated in FIG. 2B. The server computer receives an identifier from the collaborator

that defines a story concept and an element within the concept (block 221) and receives the associated content (block 223). The method 220 optionally determines if the content is acceptable in light of the standards set by the site administrator (block 225), and deletes the content from server if the content is not (block 227). Otherwise, the content is posted in the working content area (block 229) and the editor(s) for the story concept are notified of the new content at block 231.

Upon receipt of the notification, the editor(s) send their votes on the new posted content to the collaborative story server, which processes the content as illustrated in FIG. 2C. A process content method 240 executing on the server receives the votes of the editor(s) at block 241 and determines whether the editor(s) have approved the content for inclusion in the story (block 243). If not, the content is deleted from the working story area at block 245 and the method 240 terminates. The method 240 also determines if the story is complete as a result of the newly uploaded and approved content (block 247). When a story is complete, the method 240 determines if the story is to be publicly available to viewers (block 249) and posts the story in the published story area accordingly at either block 251 or 253. If the content is part of a continuing story, such as described in the example above, the content is published at various intervals and in this embodiment, block 247 represents processing that determines if it is time to publish the approved content. In yet another embodiment not shown, content is immediately published after it is approved by eliminating the processing represented by block 247.

FIG. 2D illustrates an awards method 260 that is executed by the server when the owner of the online collaborative story server chooses to reward originators and collaborators by popular vote. When the server receives a request from a viewer to view a published story (block 261), the method 260 displays the story (block 263) and requests

that the viewer vote on the story (block 265). The voting can be in multiple categories, such as story concept, individual pieces of content, continuity between scenes/chapters, characters, etc. The server receives and records the viewer's vote(s) at block 267 and determines if the current voting period is over at block 269. If the voting period is over, the method 260 determines the winners in each category (block 271) and resets the counts for the next voting period (block 273). It will be appreciated that the method 260 can also announce the winner(s) as part of the processing represented by block 271 or the announcements can be made sometime later.

An online collaborative story system has been described that allows multiple people to contribute content to create a story. Although specific embodiments have been illustrated and described herein, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that any arrangement which is calculated to achieve the same purpose may be substituted for the specific embodiments shown. This application is intended to cover any adaptations or variations of the present invention.

For example, those of ordinary skill within the art will appreciate that while invention as been described in terms of creating a story, it encompasses all types of story media, including pure text, illustrated text, the combination of audio and video, and audio only.

The terminology used in this application with respect to networks is meant to include all of environments in which a server computer communicates with client computers to send and receive data. Therefore, it is manifestly intended that this invention be limited only by the following claims and equivalents thereof.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A computerized method for creating a story by multiple collaborators
2 comprising:
3 receiving a story concept;
4 making the story concept available for online access by the multiple
5 collaborators;
6 receiving content associated with the story concept from the multiple
7 collaborators;
8 determining if the content is approved for the story; and
9 creating the story from the content that is approved.
- 1 2. The computerized method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 determining if the story concept meets pre-determined criteria; and
3 deleting the story concept if it does not meet the pre-determined criteria.
- 1 3. The computerized method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 determining if the content meets pre-determined criteria; and
3 deleting the content if it does not meet the pre-determined criteria.
- 1 4. The computerized method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 publishing the story online for public viewing.
- 1 5. The computerized method of claim 1 further comprising:
2 publishing the story online for private viewing.

1 14. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions to a
2 cause a server computer to perform a method comprising:
3 receiving content related to an element in a concept for a story from one of a
4 plurality of collaborators coupled to the server computer;
5 receiving a decision on the content from an editor, the editor being chosen
6 from the group consisting of the plurality of collaborators and an originator of the
7 concept; and
8 including the content in the story if the decision of the editor is to approve the
9 content.

1 15. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 having further computer-
2 executable instructions comprising:
3 publishing the story online when all content for the concept is approved.

1 16. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 having further computer-
2 executable instructions comprising:
3 deleting the content if it does not meet pre-determined standards.

1 17. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 having further computer-
2 executable instructions comprising:
3 receiving the concept for the story from the originator.

1 18. The computer-readable medium of claim 17 having further computer-
2 executable instructions comprising:
3 making the concept available if it meets pre-determined standards.

1 19. The computer-readable medium of claim 14 having further computer-
2 executable instructions comprising:
3 determining a reward for one or more of the originator and the plurality of
4 collaborators.

1 20. The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the reward is based on
2 votes from viewers of the story.

1 21. The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the reward is based on a
2 category for the story.

1 22. A computerized system comprising:
1 a processor;
2 a memory coupled to the processor through a system bus;
3 a computer-readable medium coupled to the processor through the system bus;
4 and
5 an online collaborative story process executed from the computer-readable
6 medium by the processor to cause the processor to receive content for an online story
7 from multiple collaborators, to receive a decision on the content from an editor, and to
8 include the content in the story if the decision is to approve the content.

1 23. The computerized system of claim 22, wherein the online collaborative story
2 process further causes the processor to publish the story online.

1 24. The computerized system of claim 22, wherein the online collaborative story
2 process further causes the processor to delete the content when the content does not
3 satisfy pre-determined criteria.

1 25. The computerized system of claim 22, wherein the online collaborative story
2 process further causes the processor to receive a concept for the story and to post the
3 concept online, wherein the concept defines the content for the story.

1 26. The computerized system of claim 22, wherein the online collaborative story
2 process further causes the processor to delete the concept when the concept does not
3 satisfy pre-determined criteria.

1 27. The computerized system of claim 22, wherein the online collaborative story
2 process further causes the processor to request votes from viewers of the story and to
3 determine a reward based on votes received in response to the request.

1 28. A networked server system comprising:
2 means for posting a concept for a story in a story concept area for access by a
3 plurality of collaborators;
4 means for posting content associated with the story concept in a working
5 content area, the content being received from the plurality of collaborators;
6 means for voting on the content in the online working content area; and
7 means for publishing the content approved by the means for voting in a
8 published story area to create the story.

1 29. The networked server system of claim 28, further comprising:
2 means for reviewing the concept and the content in accordance with pre-
3 determined standards; and
4 means for deleting the concept and the content if deemed not acceptable by the
5 means for reviewing.

1 30. The networked server system of claim 29, further comprising:

2 means for collecting votes from viewers of the story; and
3 means for awarding one or more of the plurality of collaborators for the story
4 based on the votes collected by the means for collecting.

1 31. A method of rewarding originators and collaborators of online stories
2 comprising:
3 displaying multiple stories to a plurality of viewers, each story comprising a
4 story concept submitted by an originator and story content contributed by
5 collaborators;
6 requesting a vote on each story viewed by a viewer;
7 receiving the vote from the viewer; and
8 determining at least one winner from the originators and collaborators for each
9 story.

1 32. The method of claim 31, wherein requesting a vote comprises requesting a
2 vote for each of a plurality of categories associated with each story and wherein
3 determining at least one winner comprises determining a winner in each of the
4 plurality of categories.

1 33. The method of claim 32 further comprising:
2 rewarding the at least one winner by one or more of announcing the at least
3 one winner, awarding a prize, and giving an amount of cash.

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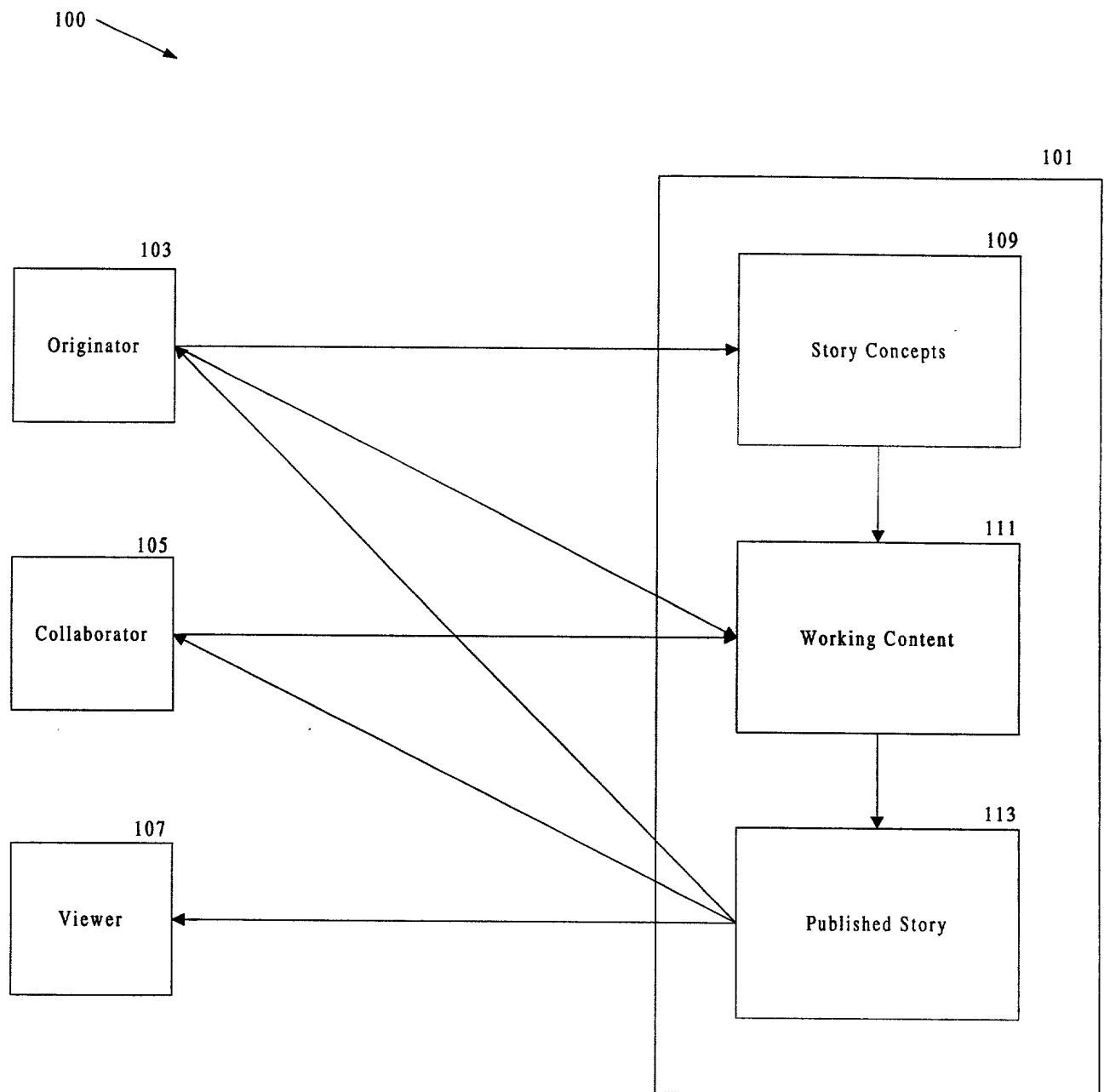


FIG. 1A

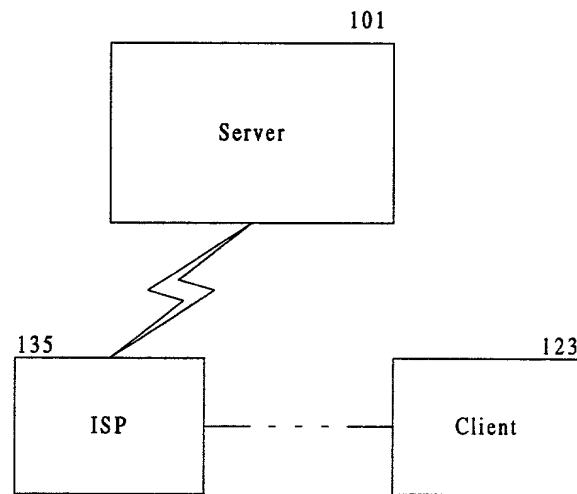


FIG. 1B

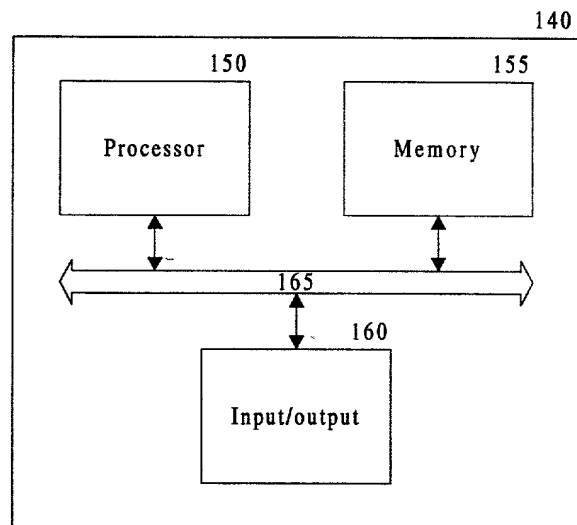


FIG. 1C

200

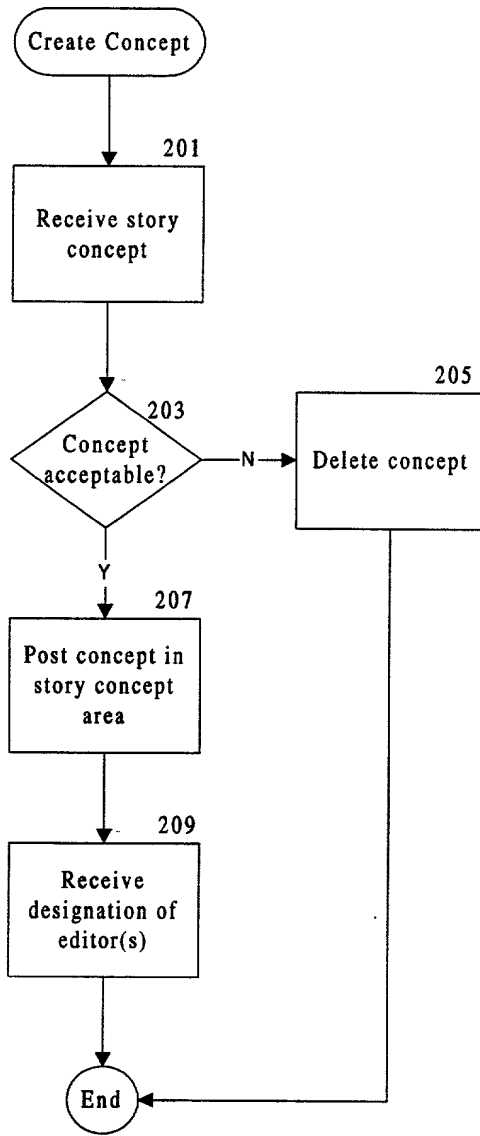


FIG. 2A

220

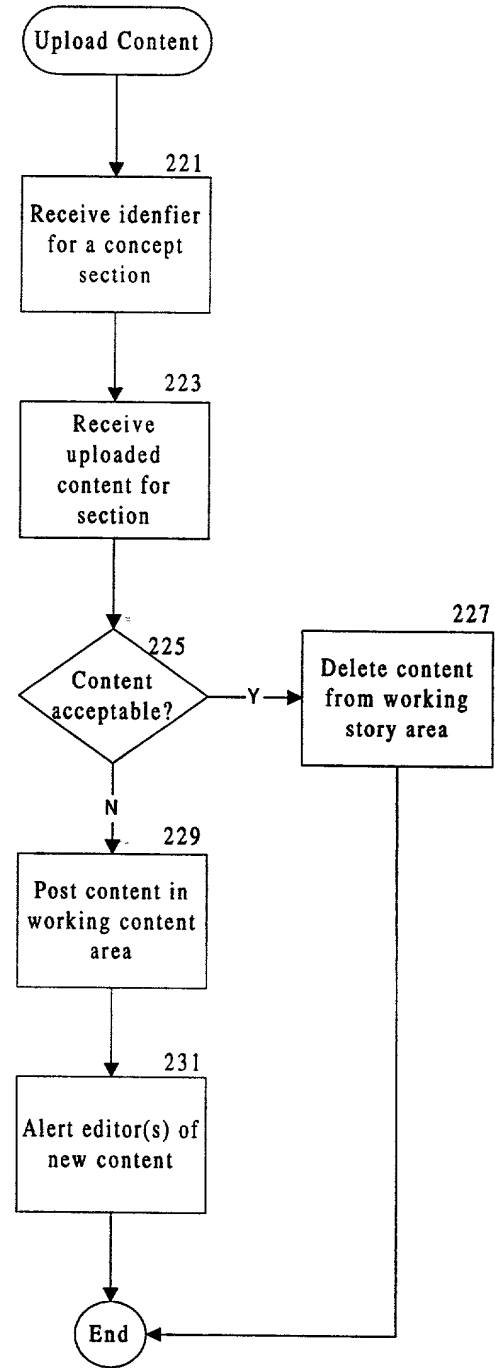


FIG. 2B

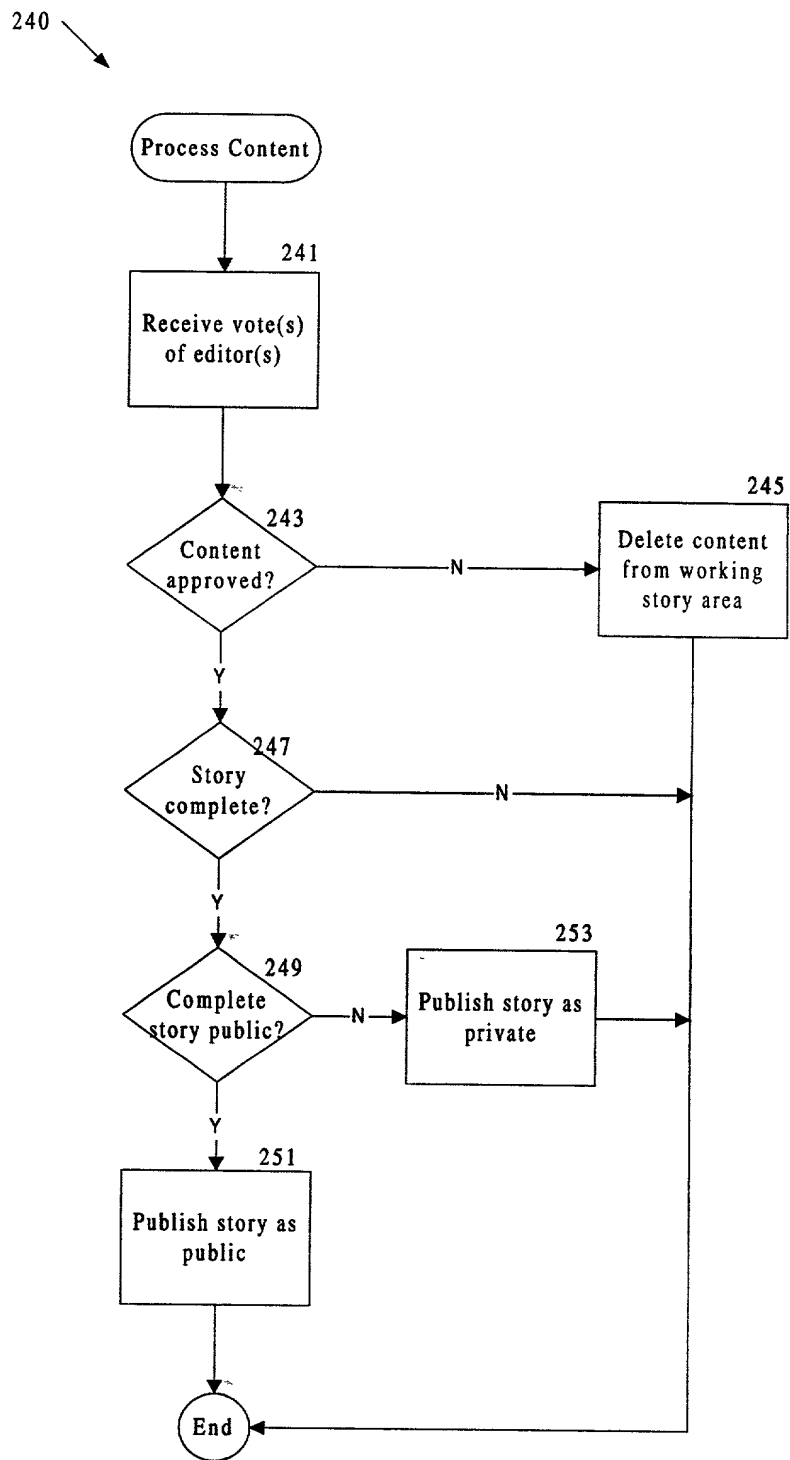


FIG. 2C

260

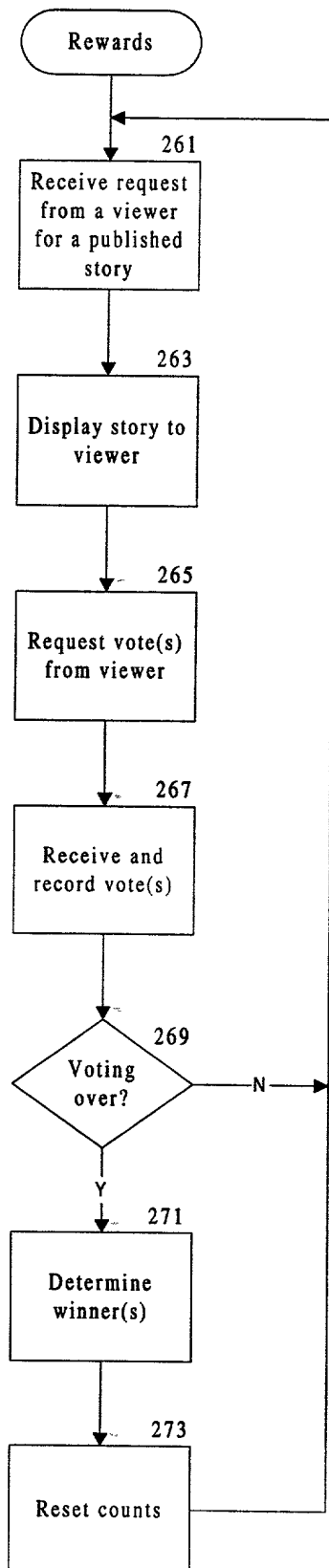


FIG. 2D

[illegible]

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below, next to my name.

ONLINE STORY COLLABORATION

X is attached hereto.
_____ was filed on _____ as
United States Application Number _____
or PCT International Application Number _____
and was amended on _____
(if applicable)

I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56.

Rev. 06/27/00 (D1)

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority
Claimed

<u>(Number)</u>	<u>(Country)</u>	<u>(Day/Month/Year Filed)</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>(Number)</u>	<u>(Country)</u>	<u>(Day/Month/Year Filed)</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>(Number)</u>	<u>(Country)</u>	<u>(Day/Month/Year Filed)</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>

I hereby claim the benefit under title 35, United States Code, Section 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

<u>60/181,841</u>	<u>February 11, 2000</u>
(Application Number)	Filing Date
<u>(Application Number)</u>	<u>Filing Date</u>

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, Section 120 of any United States application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, Section 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose all information known to me to be material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

<u>(Application Number)</u>	<u>Filing Date</u>	<u>(Status -- patented, pending, abandoned)</u>
<u>(Application Number)</u>	<u>Filing Date</u>	<u>(Status -- patented, pending, abandoned)</u>

I hereby appoint the persons listed on Appendix A hereto (which is incorporated by reference and a part of this document) as my respective patent attorneys and patent agents, with full power of substitution and revocation, to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith.

Send correspondence to Sheryl Sue Holloway, BLAKELY, SOKOLOFF, TAYLOR &
(Name of Attorney or Agent)
ZAFMAN LLP, 12400 Wilshire Boulevard 7th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90025 and direct
telephone calls to Sheryl Sue Holloway, (408) 720-8300.
(Name of Attorney or Agent)

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

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Inventor's Signature _____ Date _____

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Inventor's Signature _____ Date _____

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APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1.56 Duty to Disclose Information Material to Patentability

(a) A patent by its very nature is affected with a public interest. The public interest is best served, and the most effective patent examination occurs when, at the time an application is being examined, the Office is aware of and evaluates the teachings of all information material to patentability. Each individual associated with the filing and prosecution of a patent application has a duty of candor and good faith in dealing with the Office, which includes a duty to disclose to the Office all information known to that individual to be material to patentability as defined in this section. The duty to disclose information exists with respect to each pending claim until the claim is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration, or the application becomes abandoned. Information material to the patentability of a claim that is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration need not be submitted if the information is not material to the patentability of any claim remaining under consideration in the application. There is no duty to submit information which is not material to the patentability of any existing claim. The duty to disclose all information known to be material to patentability is deemed to be satisfied if all information known to be material to patentability of any claim issued in a patent was cited by the Office or submitted to the Office in the manner prescribed by §§1.97(b)-(d) and 1.98. However, no patent will be granted on an application in connection with which fraud on the Office was practiced or attempted or the duty of disclosure was violated through bad faith or intentional misconduct. The Office encourages applicants to carefully examine:

- (1) Prior art cited in search reports of a foreign patent office in a counterpart application, and
- (2) The closest information over which individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application believe any pending claim patentably defines, to make sure that any material information contained therein is disclosed to the Office.

(b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and

- (1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim; or
- (2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:
 - (i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or
 - (ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A prima facie case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

(c) Individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application within the meaning of this section are:

- (1) Each inventor named in the application;
- (2) Each attorney or agent who prepares or prosecutes the application; and
- (3) Every other person who is substantively involved in the preparation or prosecution of the application and who is associated with the inventor, with the assignee or with anyone to whom there is an obligation to assign the application.

(d) Individuals other than the attorney, agent or inventor may comply with this section by disclosing information to the attorney, agent, or inventor.